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From Lisa's Desk

The Worland FSA staff hopes that your holidays were wonderful and joyous.

Please note due to current staffing, we will not be able to hold office days on the first Tuesday of the month at the Thermopolis NRCS office. We hope to be able to restart office days in Thermopolis later in the year.

Please note the following deadlines for 2023 applications:

- Emergency Livestock Assistance Program: 1/30/2024
- Loan Deficiency Payments for Wool or Pelts: 1/31/2024
- Livestock Indemnity Program: 2/29/2024

Please note the following deadline for 2024 applications:

- Agriculture Risk (**ARC**) and Price Loss Coverage (**PLC**): 3/15/2024

If you have any questions, please contact this office at 307-347-2456 ext. 2.

Best Wishes,

Lisa Bower, CED



Washakie-Hot Springs County Farm Service Agency Announces County Committee Election Results

Washakie-Hot Springs County U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that County Committee elections are over and the ballots have been counted.

Nick Geis of Worland was elected to represent Local Administrative Area (LAA) 2.



County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. All recently elected county committee members will take office in January 2024 and will be joining the existing committee. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee, and they are made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters who are elected by local producers.

Nearly 7,800 FSA county committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has 3 to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. Approximately one-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members impact the administration of FSA within a community by applying their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

County committee members impact producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. Members conduct hearings and reviews as requested by the state committee, ensure underserved farmers, ranchers and foresters are fairly represented, make recommendations to the state committee on existing programs, monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of FSA programs. They also assist with outreach and inform underserved producers such as beginning farmers, ranchers and foresters, about FSA opportunities.

For more information, visit the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov/elections or contact the Washakie-Hot Springs County FSA office at 307-347-2456.

Wool Triggers Loan Deficiency Payment in Washakie County and Hot Springs County

If you grow wool in Washakie or Hot Springs County, you may be eligible for loan deficiency payments (LDPs) from the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

LDPs and marketing assistance loans (MALs) are marketing tools that are available during shearing.

MALs help producers meet cash flow needs without selling commodities when market prices are at harvest-time lows. Producers who are eligible for marketing loans, but choose to forgo the loan, are eligible for LDPs if the posted county price falls below the county loan rate.

Producers can purchase a commodity certificate that may be exchanged for the outstanding loan collateral. Daily LDP rates are available online at fsa.usda.gov.

Rules related to payment limitations, actively engaged in farming and cash-rent tenant no longer apply to LDPs.

For more information, contact your Washakie-Hot Springs County USDA Service Center at 307-347-2456 or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.



USDA Now Accepting Applications for Farm Loans Online

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has launched an [online application for Direct Loan customers](#). More than 26,000 customers who submit a Direct Loan application each year can now use an online, interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet and build a farm operating plan. This tool is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, improve customers service, and expand credit access.



The online farm loan application replicates the support an applicant would receive when completing a loan application in person with an FSA Farm Loan Officer, while continuing to provide customers with one-on-one assistance as needed. This tool and other process improvements allow farmers and ranchers to submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete and withdrawn applications.

Through a personalized dashboard, borrowers can track the progress of their loan application. It can be accessed on farmers.gov or by completing FSA's Loan Assistance Tool at farmers.gov/loan-assistance-tool. To use the online loan application tool, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \("eAuth"\) account or a Login.gov account](#). For the initial stage, the online application tool is only available for producers who will be, or are currently, operating their farm as an individual. FSA is expanding the tools availability to married couples applying jointly and other legal entities in 2024.

Farm Loan Improvement Efforts

FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate Farm Loan Program customer-facing business processes. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a Direct Loan application to FSA annually, and its 85,000 Direct Loan borrowers, FSA has made improvements this year, including:

- A [simplified direct loan paper application](#), reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- The [Loan Assistance Tool on farmers.gov](#) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the Direct Loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.

More Information

FSA continues to accept and review individual requests for assistance from borrowers who took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their direct FSA loans or those who missed a recent installment or are unable to make their next scheduled installment. All requests for assistance must be received by Dec. 31, 2023. For more information, or to submit a request for assistance, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit farmers.gov/inflation-reduction-investments/assistance.

The Inflation Reduction Act, a historic, once-in-a-generation investment and opportunity for agricultural communities, provided \$3.1 billion for USDA to provide relief for distressed borrowers with certain FSA direct and guaranteed loans and to expedite assistance for those whose agricultural operations are at financial risk. Since October 2022, USDA has provided approximately \$1.6 billion in immediate assistance to more than 27,000 financially distressed direct and guaranteed FSA loan borrowers.

Producers Encouraged to Apply Now for USDA Conservation Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is encouraging agricultural producers and forest landowners to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024 as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which help a wide variety of producers, including urban and organic producers.



For fiscal year 2024, NRCS has \$3 billion in Inflation Reduction Act funds to invest in [climate-smart mitigation activities](#). This year, NRCS expanded the list of those activities as well as expanded priority areas for ACEP for grasslands, wetlands and farmlands at risk of conversion. Learn more about those expansions in our [Sept. 28, 2023 news release](#).

Additionally, for fiscal year 2024, NRCS has over \$2 billion in Farm Bill funding available to producers for priorities like organic and urban agriculture, soil health, water quality and quantity and wildlife habitat development. This extensive amount of funding will be used to meet producer demand for our oversubscribed programs, maximize climate benefits and help producers address their natural resource challenges.

NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round. To apply for fiscal year 2024 funding, apply by January 19, 2024 by contacting the Worland Field Office (307-347-2456).



Worland USDA Service Center

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FSA:

County Executive Director

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Farm Loan Manager

Jolene Beiswenger 307-347-2456 x 111
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Farm Loan Analyst - Vacant

County Committee:

Jim Butterfield, Vice Chairperson
Billie Jo Norsworthy, Member
Cameron Roady, Member
Marilyn Vass, Member
Nick Geis, Member

NRCS:

District Conservationist

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